



**Public Hearing Testimony of
Sharon Palmer, Commissioner
Department of Labor
General Law Committee
March 11, 2014**

Good Afternoon Senator Doyle, Representative Baram, Senator Witkos and Representative Carter and members of the General Law Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding **Senate Bill No. 268, AAC Apprenticeship Ratios**. My name is Sharon Palmer and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor.

I oppose this bill. Current law provides apprenticeship and journeyperson hiring ratios at a rate that requires employers to hire more journeypersons than apprentices. The intent of the law is to ensure that enough journeypersons are on staff at any one employer in order to provide adequate mentoring to the apprentices, particularly regarding job training and safety. The proposed bill seeks to decrease significantly the hiring ratios, in many cases at a one to one ratio. I cannot support legislation that would increase the chance that apprentices would not have the proper guidance, thereby threatening their training and safety. Moreover, current law allows the Department to offer ratio relief to employers if needed. When an employer applies to the Department for ratio relief, it allows the agency to examine whether the employer has any outstanding wage or workplace standards or OSHA violations; whether the journeyperson list for the employer is accurate, including that the journeypersons have the correct licenses; and the completion rates of apprentices with that employer within the last five years. Even if the Department finds that the employer is eligible for ratio relief, relief is not granted at a one to one ratio. Rather, the Department would still require that several more journeypersons than apprentices are on staff. As such, the proposed bill would undermine the level of training that our apprentice population should be afforded and that promote qualified licensed workers in the apprenticeship trades.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today.